

Porsena of Clusium in his arms. And he unwrapped him from front to back and back to front. When the bandage was all off him, Lars Porsena of Clusium did give himself a stretch and his

wings a little shake. And I said a little prayer for his getting well and a new tail soon. And the man that wears gray neekties and is kind to mice said Amen. Then we came home.

(To be continued)

OLD LEMUEL'S JOURNEY

BY ALICE BROWN

I

OLD LEMUEL WOOD was stretched on his bed in the best bedroom. He was going to die. He was not really old, though his neighbors called him so, half in derision, half in pity; but he looked like death and age together, as he lay there, his eyes screwed up, his thin mouth tightly shut, and his whole wrinkled face somehow conveying the impression that it had gone out of business, so far as any evidence it might give, and that nobody was to find out anything of Lemuel Wood any more.

Lemuel was a miser. He had worked hard and pared thin, and his wife, a sweet, plump, blonde woman, had not been able to sway him an inch from the rigor of his ways. They were well to do, inheriting prosperity from the beginning, and yet they had always lived 'nigh the wind.' The neighbors said Lemuel even begrudged his wife's plumpness to her. He suspected she ate more than she'd a right to, or she never could have gained so persistently. He was thin as a rail, and so was Dan, their son, who took after his mother in every inner characteristic and went about from childhood with a seeking

look because he never could have things the other boys had, never even time to play with them. Lemuel made it known in the boy's babyhood that he was not named Daniel, simply Dan, and the neighbors again opined that this was because it would take less ink to write it, if he had to sign a document; they furthermore asserted that his father, when he met a man named Ai, from a neighboring town, was heard to express regret that he had n't known there was a proper name of two letters instead of three.

Lemuel himself was never called by his actual name except in direct address. He had renamed himself by a shady transaction the neighborhood had not been slow at noting, and thenceforth he carried the label of it in every slightest allusion to him. A lawyer in Sudleigh had bought several cords of wood of him, to be delivered 'split and stove-wood length,' which, in this case, was twelve inches; and Lemuel had sawed and split the cord-wood sticks himself, with the result that all the lawyer's sticks were slightly short. From each four-foot stick Lemuel had thrown out a 'nubbins' from the end.

Little Dana West, who had come over to buy a peck of potatoes for his mother and tagged after Mrs. Wood when she ran down to the lower barn to ask her husband what bin she should get the potatoes from, stood by while she asked her question, and then saw her eye fall on the pile of nubbins thrown to one side.

'Lemuel,' said she, 'what are them little chunks?'

'You take some of 'em in your apron,' said Lemuel. 'They'll be good to brash up the fire with.'

'You don't mean,' said she, 'you're sawin' them off the ends o' Lawyer Trumbull's wood?'

'Tain't so easy as you might think to saw off twelve-inch wood by your eye,' said Lemuel. 'You take a handful of 'em with you when you go.'

But Mrs. Wood shut her mouth like a steel trap, Dana said, and went back to the house, and she carried no handful of chunks; and a few days after that, when Lemuel had gone to market and Dana came over to see if he could get Dan to go coltsfootin', he came on Mrs. Wood kneeling by the back veranda, a half-bushel basket of the nubbins beside her. And she had loosened a slat of the lattice, and was throwing the nubbins under, fast and furious. And again her mouth was like a steel trap.

No one ever knew what Lawyer Trumbull said, when the wood was delivered; but Dan and his mother knew that Lemuel came home 'mad as a hornet' and scarcely spoke for days. And there was no butter on the table for the period of his displeasure; and when Mrs. Wood brought it out, as she did three times a day, she was ordered to 'take that stuff away.' This continued until, as she and Dan judged, Lemuel concluded that the discount Lawyer Trumbull had caused him to accept on the wood had been worked

out. But not here did Nemesis leniently pause. Dana had told his mother and his mother told her cronies, and Lemuel, whose middle name was Ingersoll and who signed himself, in a crabbed hand, 'L. I. Wood,' was known thereafter as 'old 'Leven-Inch Wood.' Did he know it? No one could say. Nobody would have taxed him with it, for he was, it was owned, a good-natured old cuss, after all, if you'd only give him the last cent.

And now old 'Leven-Inch was dying, and, against his will, in the best bedroom. The doctor had ordered him in there because the little dark room where he had slept all his life had scant air even for a man in health, and not a ray of sun. Lemuel was carried in protesting, and when he had been settled in the white sheets, he looked up at Mary, his wife, whose compassion for him made this crossing of his will even more terrible than death itself, and said, —

'Don't you s'pose you could have the bed moved whilst you take up the straw mattin'?''

'What you want the mattin' up for, dear?' she asked tenderly.

The little love word she had not used to him since the first year of their marriage. She had grown satirical, in a mild, hidden way, and she would have judged that he thought it wasted breath.

'That mattin' 's over forty years old,' said Lemuel, 'an' the doctor's boots are terrible heavy. Anyways, if Dan has to lift me, you make him come in in his stockin' feet.'

Two tears trickled out of his eyes, and his wife wiped them away. By long habit of living with him she knew exactly how he felt, and the things she had all their lives fought in him, with a bitter resolution, seemed to her now his terrible misfortune, the bruises and stabs self-inflicted on a suffering child.

One day, when he was feeling a little

stronger, he called her to sit down by the bed.

'Don't you hitch your chair when you git up,' he cautioned her. 'There's nothin' easier in the world than marrin' a mop-board, an' doctor alone's enough to call for a new coat o' paint. Now I want to tell you about my will.'

She begged him to settle down and take a nap. She did n't want to hear about a will. But he went on, —

'I've cut off Dan with a hunderd dollars. That's in case he marries the Tolman gal.'

'Why,' said his wife, 'what makes you think he wants to marry Lyddy Tolman?' She thought the secret had been well kept.

'I guess I found it out as soon as anybody,' said Lemuel shrewdly. 'There's that day I come from market 'fore you expected me, an' you was b'ilin' molasses candy over the stove. An' that night I see him slip out with that little checkered box in his hand, the one in the upper cupboard, and I says to myself, "That's candy," an' I walked a step or two arter him and see where he went.'

He ended in triumph, but Mary turned her eyes from him, she felt such shame.

'Next day I had it out with him,' said Lemuel. 'I told him she's no more fit for a farm like this than a chiny doll.'

'She's real strong, Lemuel,' his wife pleaded. 'She's slim-lookin', I know, but she can do her part.'

'Well,' said Lemuel, 'be that as it may, I ain't a-goin' to take the resk. But, in case he marries Isabel Flagg within two years after my demise, then the heft o' the property goes to him. You're provided for anyways. Seemed to me at your age you would n't start out squanderin' things right an' left as a younger woman might.'

'Why, Lemuel,' said his wife, 'Isabel

Flagg's no more idea o' marryin' our Dan than the man in the moon. She's all took up with Sam Towle. An' as for Dan, he would n't look at her if she's the last woman on earth — a great strammin' creatur' that can milk ten cows an' set down to her supper afterwards an' not wash her hands.'

'She's a good strong worker,' said Lemuel. 'Now you go off an' let me see 'f I can git me a wink o' sleep 'fore doctor comes. I've got suthin' to thrash out with him.'

Mary ventured one word more.

'Lemuel,' said she, 'about Isabel Flagg: if you put that in your will, same's you said, you'll make Dan a laughin'-stock all over the county, an' her, too. I should n't wonder if it got into the Boston papers. They're terrible smart pickin' things up.'

'Better laugh than cry,' said Lemuel, shutting his eyes so tight that he seemed to shut his whole face with them. 'I guess when Dan's as old as I be an' layin' here, — don't you set that tumbler on the table less'n you put a piece o' newspaper under it, — I guess then he'll be glad he had a father that knew enough to provide for him, if he did n't know himself. You put that curtain up as fur's 't will go. That kind o' green's terrible easy to fade.'

II

Lemuel had managed a comfortable nap before the doctor came. He seemed to know ways of saving his strength, Mary thought, in wonder at him, as unerringly as he knew the roads to hoarding money.

The doctor was an old man, a giant in size and still in strength, with heavy black eyebrows and thick white hair. He came stooping into the low bedroom and Lemuel snapped his eyes open and greeted him, —

'Now, doctor, I want to ask ye one

question, an' if it's yes you can look at my tongue an' feel my pulse. If it's no, ye can't. Be I goin' to git well?'

The doctor sat down and regarded him from under heavy brows.

'Well,' said he, 'not right off.'

'Don't you beat about the bush,' said Lemuel. 'I won't have it. I pay you for comin' here, an' I've got a right to see 't you earn your money. Now, be I goin' to git well or be I goin' to die?'

The doctor still regarded him. He was a merciful man, but old 'Leven-Inch was, he told himself, enough to try a saint.

'Come, come,' said Lemuel, 'don't you set there studyin' how you can screw two dollars more out o' me. Be I goin' to git well?'

'No,' said the doctor shortly. He rose to his feet. 'You're not.'

'Ah!' said Lemuel, as if he were supremely satisfied. 'That's the talk. Now how soon be I goin' to die?'

'I don't know,' said the doctor. 'It might be a matter of three weeks.'

'Ah!' said Lemuel again. 'Then you need n't come here no more. If I was goin' to git well, I'd let ye come to see if you could n't for'ard the v'y'ge an' git me up 'fore hayin'. But if I'm goin' to die, I guess I can die full as easy without a doctor as with one. No, no.' He put his hand under the sheet. The doctor had taken a step toward the bed. 'I ain't a-goin' to have my pulse felt nor no thermometers in my mouth. An' you see 't you don't charge this call up to me, for you ain't done an endurin' thing an' you know it.'

The doctor turned away from him, but at the door he stopped. He had to be sorry for the wretched bundle of mortality that could not take its riches with it.

'You poor old fool!' he said; 'you don't know what you're talking about. You'd better let me come in once in a while. I won't charge you for it.'

'Aha!' said Lemuel, with an actual crow of delighted laughter, he felt himself so clever. 'Mebbe ye would n't charge me whilst I'm here to chalk it up. You'd charge it to the estate. I know ye!'

And the doctor, being human, swore mildly at him and left. Mary followed him down to the gate. She had been listening and knew.

'O doctor!' she said; 'I don't see what under the sun I'm goin' to do if he won't have you no more. I never can go through with it in the world.'

'Don't you worry,' said the doctor. He lifted his weight into the carriage and then stepped back to shake hands with her. 'If he gets uneasy you just send round and I'll come in. Maybe I can take a look at him when he's asleep or something. I don't want to hound the poor old devil — Well, maybe we can do something for him when the time comes.'

He drove away rather wishing he had not called Lemuel a poor old devil to his wife. But Mary understood. To her, also, he was a poor old devil in the terms of compassion she knew how to translate. Mary understood Lemuel very well after these married years. She knew how he had been tangled in the snarl of his mortality, and she hardly saw how he was to undertake this journey into the mystery he seemed to regard as lightly as a trip to market: that is, she wished he need not prepare to enter on it so unfriended and alone.

Lemuel lay there for three weeks, demanding nothing but precautions against the wear and tear of house and furniture, and speaking seldom. Mary took care of him night and day, and Dan, the big, sad-faced son, lifted him and tried to take his turn with the nursing at night. But Lemuel fought this off with a terse authority of tone.

'I ain't goin' to have him laz'in'

round in here, pullin' an' haulin', he said to Mary, 'lettin' the farm work git all behindhand. Don't you fetch him in here less 'n I tell you to, in case I have to give him some orders about the stock.'

At the end of the three weeks, on a day when his breath had shortened more and more, until it seemed to Mary it was only a flutter in his throat, she told Dan the time had come. He could stay out in the sitting-room, not to worry father, but presently she would need him.

Dan sat there by the west window, looking out at the orchard where the birds were loud, and even he could not tell what he was thinking. Was he sad because his father was dying, or did some tightened spring inside him unroll with a great relief at the prospect of freedom after all his life of meagre living? He could not tell. All he knew was that it was a beautiful day, and his heart ached hard.

Suddenly, with a little swift rush, unlike her dragging step of the last weeks, his mother came, put a hand on his shoulder and supported herself by it. She was breathing fast. Dan turned under the touch and stared up at her. He had never seen his mother look like this, and a slow wonder came over him. Father had always been the grit in the wheels, the boulder in the path. Was it possible mother had forgotten all that because father was on his way to some other place, to stay forever? He was very like his mother, and suddenly, after that thought, to his renewed wonder he felt an unaccustomed choke in his own throat.

'He's gone,' said she, in the instant of getting her breath. 'You run right over to Ezra's an' tell him to come, quick's he can. Tell him you an' I'll help.'

Dan sprang to his feet. Death was new to him and he felt it was all hurry.

But his mother, glancing from the window at the sound of wheels, cried out,—

'My Lord 'a' mercy! there's doctor. You run an' git him in.'

The doctor had drawn up at the gate, and now he got out and hitched his horse; and he came along the path and into the sitting-room, where Dan and Mary waited for him, the tale of Lemuel's going on their faces.

'He's gone, doctor,' said Mary. 'I'm terrible glad you've come.'

'When?' asked the doctor.

'Just now.'

He went on into the bedroom, and took up Lemuel's nerveless hand.

'Yes,' he said. And then, because he was on the point of adding, 'Poor old devil!' he checked himself and held the flaccid wrist, and suddenly a look of curiosity and eagerness came into his face. He made himself busy about the body, and Mary felt a sick anticipation that did not seem like hope, and Dan, with that overwhelming misery of realizing the piteousness of things mortal in decay, thought how horrible it all was. The doctor turned to them, hesitated a moment, and walked past them out of the bedroom, and they followed him. He was frowning so that his black brows met.

'He's given up the ghost,' he said, in a tone of unwilling conviction. 'But, by thunder!' he added, as if another conviction struck him full in the face, 'that man ain't dead!'

All day he stayed with them and fought against the forces of dissolution to bring Lemuel back to life. But the man resisted him. The ghost he had given up refused to come back, and at night the doctor went away for a necessary visit, disheartened.

'Don't you leave him,' he told them. 'Don't you get Ezra Hines over here, laying him out. If there's any change, you send for me.'

Old Lemuel, from being a poor old

devil, of no use to himself or anybody else, as the doctor had always characterized him in his own mind when he saw him about on his ant-like delvings, had become to him his dearest concern. The passion of the scientist enveloped the poor old body, and he would have welcomed him back as the sisters welcomed Lazarus.

III

On the morning of the third day, while Mary sat beside the bed and Dan continued his terrible watch in the next room, old Lemuel opened his eyes. Hour after hour, while Mary sat there, she had wondered at intervals what she should do if he really did open them. She thought it probable she should scream. But now she felt no impulse of amazement or of joy. She took the covered glass from the table at her side and poised the spoon.

'I guess,' she said, 'I'll give you a little mite o' this.' She had almost said, 'Doctor told me to'; but that she discarded as likely to annoy him in any state of mind he might have kept.

But Lemuel was looking directly at her with a strange glance of certainty and even brightness.

'Mary,' said he, 'where d'you s'pose I've been?'

Mary put back the spoon into the glass. She saw the contents trembling with her hand. But she answered him quietly with another question, —

'Where have you been?'

He screwed up his eyes and smiled a little.

'You take my keys out o' my trowsis pocket,' said he, 'an' go an' unlock the top left-hand little drawer o' my desk. My will's in there. You bring it here to me.'

Mary set down the glass and went out of the room. As she passed Dan she said to him in a steady voice he

wondered at, 'Your father's come to. You run over an' tell doctor an' ask him to git here quick's he can. Tell him to come in as if he happened to be goin' by.'

She went on to the sitting-room, unlocked the little drawer, took out the paper, and carried it back to Lemuel.

'You tear it,' said he, 'right through the middle. No, don't ye do it, neither. I dunno but the law could git hold o' ye if Lawyer Trumbull happened to tell ye old 'Leven-Inch left a will, an' ask ye where 't was. You give it here an' I'll fix it.'

Mary took up the tumbler and spoon again.

'You let me give you a little mite o' this,' she said; and he took it willingly, his busy hands tearing slowly at the will. It took him a long time to tear it into the fragments he judged small enough, and half way through the task he bade Mary bring a newspaper, so that he might know no fragments had escaped him. And there in a few minutes the doctor found him lying placidly on the pillows, a little heap of torn paper under his hovering palms.

Old Lemuel put out his hand. 'You can feel my pulse if you want to,' he said, 'an' then you can give me suthin' to keep me goin' a spell. I've got consid'able to do.'

'You've had a good long sleep,' said the doctor speciously. 'Feel stronger for it, don't you?'

'I ain't been asleep,' said Lemuel, with a queer little smile neither Mary nor the doctor had seen on his face before.

'Well, I s'pose,' said the doctor jocosely, his hand on the sinewy old wrist, 'I s'pose you'll be telling us next you've heard every word that's been said in this room, since you dropped off.'

'No,' said Lemuel. 'I ain't been here.'

'Where have you been?'

Again Lemuel smiled and screwed up his eyes. But he opened them at once.

'You bear witness, doctor,' said he, 'these here papers on my chist is what's left o' my will. I tore it up. I tore it up myself. There ain't nobody else had the leastest thing to do with it. Now, you take them papers an' go out an' put 'em in the kitchen stove.'

And the doctor, not being troubled by imaginative hypotheses of the legality of the act, did it. When Lemuel had been made comfortable, — and for the first time Mary could remember he accepted comfort with an alert responsiveness, objecting only to spoon victuals as not sustaining enough for a man with work before him, — the doctor went away, and Lemuel, who was supposed now to settle down to sleep, put his hand on Mary's wrist.

'You se' down here side o' me,' he bade her, 'an' we'll plan it all out. I've got consid'able to do.'

Mary sat down and he kept his hand on her wrist.

'What day's to-day?' he asked her. 'Sunday.'

'That's what I thought. Well, you can't do nothin' 'fore Monday. Now Tuesday arternoon I want you should give a party.'

'A party?' said Mary; and in her wonder she felt as if, though she had received him quietly when he came back, the moment was perhaps here when she must make some outcry from the strangeness of it all. 'What kind of a party?'

'A tea-party,' said Lemuel, smacking his lips. 'Ain't that 'bout the only kind there is this season o' the year?'

'Why,' said Mary, and then paused. She had been about to say, 'You never would let me have a party. It cost too much.' But she ended, 'I don't think it's any time for a party, you sick an' all.'

'What kind o' cake was that your mother used to stir up,' said Lemuel, 'an' we used to have it out on the front porch with lemonade when I come courtin' you?'

'One-two-three-four,' said Mary, 'with raisins in it an' citron.'

'Terrible nice cake that was,' said Lemuel. 'Monday you make up a lot of it; cookies, too, an' sugar gingerbread. Ain't you got mother's cookycutters, leaf-patterns an' hearts an' rounds?'

'But Lemuel,' said she, 'them things are terrible expensive, high as everything is now.' She saw no way of stopping him but appealing to his dearest vice.

'You can bile a ham,' said he, luxuriating in his flights. 'You do as I tell ye. If you don't help me out, I dunno how I shall git through with it.'

He looked worried now, and this frightened her.

'Course I'll help you out, Lemuel,' she said. 'Who do you want to your party?'

'Everybody in the neighborhood,' said Lemuel, 'old an' young. I'd rather have the whole county, but there ain't no time. Plague take it all! why did n't I know sooner about there bein' no time. But the neighborhood I guess we can manage. You tell Dan to fix up some trestles an' boards on 'em out under the old elm. There'll be too many to eat indoor.'

'Lemuel,' said his wife, 'I dunno how I can. I don't b'lieve I could carry it through. An' if I could, I guess everybody'd think I was out of my head, you sick an' all.'

Lemuel considered for a moment.

'Well, then,' said he, 'you might scare up some kind of a reason for 't. Dan could git married, if he felt like it, an' I kinder think he does. There's that gal he carried the candy to in the checkered box. You say she's a likely

gal. I dunno how long 't'll take him to git his license, as the law directs; but you tell him to harness up an' ask the gal, an' ride right off an' see to it this artemnoon.'

Mary felt the sickness of apprehension born out of the unknown.

'But Lemuel,' she said, 'folks can't git married like that, all of a whew. Even if they've talked it over, — an' I s'pose they have, — she ain't begun to think o' gittin' her clo'es.'

'Then let her turn to an' git 'em now,' said Lemuel, 'fore she's a day older. You gi' me my bank-book, out o' that same drawer, an' I'll sign an order so's Dan can draw out as much as he needs — the whole business, if he wants to. You take the gal over to Sudleigh an' fit her out. An' while you're about it, you git suthin' for yourself, too. Kind of a stiff silk, same's your mother used to wear, the sort that'll stand alone.'

'I don't want —' said Mary; but her voice failed her and she went blindly out of the room.

Lemuel called after her, —

'An' you tell him to git his name se' down Dan'el, in the license, same as his gran'ther's. I al'ays mistrusted he never took to bein' called Dan.'

Mary hesitated there by the door, her face turned from him.

'Lemuel,' she said, 'it's jest as I told you; I ain't got the heart to set out makin' cake. I dunno's I've got the strength, neither. I've been terrible worried about you, an' it's told on me. I never should ha' brought it up, never in the world, only I dunno how I can, Lemuel, I dunno how I can.'

'Course you can't,' said Lemuel, jovially. 'You hire Mis' Buell an' Nancy Towle to come in an' do the heft on 't. Lay the things out afore 'em, the eggs an' the butter an' the citron an' raisins,' — Mary never forgot the childlike delight of his tone

while he enumerated these, — 'an' give 'em the receipts an' tell 'em to go ahead, an' then you come in here an' set with me. Mis' Buell's a terrible extravagant cook. She uses tea by the handful, an' I heard the Thrashers say, that week she boarded 'em, her pie-crust'd melt in your mouth.'

Then something in Mary's bowed shoulders seemed to speak to him, and he added, in a softened tone she had not heard from him since the days of their courtship, 'But she can't hold a candle to you, Mary. Any woman can cook if you give 'em things enough to do with, but there's one or two that can git pie off a rock, as ye might say. I ain't seen but one, but mebbe there's another some'er's, same's there's more 'n one pea in a pod. They al'ays set out suthin' to make your mouth water, no matter 'f you do keep 'em sailin' nigh the wind.'

'Lemuel,' said his wife. She was troubled beyond measure by this incursion into the delights of the palate. 'Be you hungry?'

Lemuel laughed. 'Hungry?' said he. 'Lor', no, I guess I ain't. All I want is to have doctor see 't I have suthin' to keep me up, what time I'm here.'

IV

The doctor came in that afternoon and found him very much alive. Mary waylaid him at the gate and besought him to discourage the strange project of the party, or the wedding, as it might prove. He listened to her gravely, nodding from time to time, but when she asked him, 'Doctor, what'd he mean by sayin' to me, that first minute he opened his eyes, "Mary, where d'you s'pose I've been?"'

'Well,' said the doctor, looking up at her sharply, 'where d'you suppose he'd been? Did n't he tell you? I s'pose you asked him.'

'Oh, yes, I asked him, but he never said a word — only kinder screwed up his eyes an' laughed. No, he did n't really laugh, only looked as if he could if he'd a mind to. As if he knew suthin' he did n't think best to tell.'

'Mary,' said the doctor, and made it all the more serious by using her Christian name, 'I should n't worry him, if I were you, by going against his little fancies. If he wanted anything, I should let him have it. And if he says any more about where he's been, I hope you'll remember it just as it was, and, if you think you can't remember it, put it down on paper. I'd like mighty well to know where he's been.'

And it seemed as if the doctor had not only been fascinated by the problem of persuading old Lemuel back to this earth, but was doubly attracted, now he had him alive. He came in once, and sometimes twice, a day, and they talked, old Lemuel carrying on his side of it as if he were in health; only not as he would have done before he went away. The doctor reminded him at the outset that these were not professional visits: there would be no fee. But Lemuel smiled at him shrewdly and said, —

'Charge it up! charge it up! the estate's good for it.'

The doctor never questioned him about his mysterious going away, and Lemuel never once referred to it. Mary, dazed and unremonstrating, found herself putting the party through. She let Lemuel, lying there in his bed, plan the manner of it, and she and Dan carried it out. Mrs. Buell came and cooked, and Nancy helped her, and there was a rich odor of good things about the house.

Dan walked as one in a dream. He had obeyed his father implicitly, and Lydia Tolman had allowed herself to be caught up on the wings of their will, and her mother, dazed by the strange-

ness of it all, drove over to Sudleigh with her and bought her white garments and a wedding dress.

It was the day before the wedding, when the house was smelling of meats and spices and there was a vague air of excitement, not only through its rooms, but through all the neighborhood as well, that Lemuel demanded to be bolstered up in bed.

'I want to set up on end a spell,' said he. And Dan managed it without trouble. 'There,' said Lemuel, 'now you fetch me the Bible.'

Mary did it, wondering. She came back with the great family Bible in her hand.

'Don't you think,' she said, hesitatingly, because it was an implication of his extremity, 'you better let me read some out loud? It's kinder heavy to hold.'

'No,' said Lemuel briskly, 'I don't want no readin'. I ain't got time. I want to look up suthin'. You bring me a pencil.'

So she left him there, with the Bible propped against his knees, frowning through his spectacles, and peering while he turned page after page. This was in the morning, and at three o'clock in the afternoon he had found what he sought.

'Where's Dan?' he called to Mary, who was making herself busy in the next room, to be near him. 'You tell him to come here.'

In a few minutes Dan came slouching in. He was timid before his father, and especially since Lemuel had come back so strangely changed. As he went past his mother, through the outer room, she thought what a beautiful young man he was, with the strength and sadness of his face and his wonderful frame, made to work and also to beguile the eye with its ease and suppleness. He came in and stood looking down at his father in a pathetic dis-

trust and questioning, and with this a great compassion.

'What is it, father?' he asked.

'You listen to this,' said Lemuel, his lean forefinger on the page. 'I've had a terrible time findin' it, but I knew 't was some'r's here. Now you listen. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." ' He read it slowly with emphasis and a certain delight — either in the verse or in his own cleverness in finding it. Then he read it again. 'I've put a line under it,' he said, 'an' I'm goin' to put in a mark, too, so's you can turn to it. You hand me that piece o' newspaper there on the bureau. I'll lay that in.'

Dan gave him the paper, and he laid it carefully between the pages and closed the book.

'There,' said he, 'you can carry this off.'

'Don't you want I should leave it so's you can have some read —'

Dan paused there. His father's bright eyes made him feel as if he had said something strangely beside the question.

'No,' said Lemuel alertly, 'I'm through with it. Look here,' he called when Dan, carrying the Bible, had reached the door, 'd'you buy yourself a weddin' suit?'

Dan turned and looked at him. His young face grew stern. Was his father going to take it all back?

'Yes,' he said, 'I did.'

'That's right,' said Lemuel, chuckling. 'That's right. What color?'

'Blue.'

'Ha! that's jest what I'd ha' pick-ed out myself. Ye can't do better'n blue.'

The day of the party, or the wedding, — they hardly knew which to call it, — was set for Thursday; not quite so soon as Lemuel had planned, because there was so much to do. But when the sun rose fresh from lightest morning clouds

and shone divinely, the house was in holiday dress, and Lemuel, from his bedroom, gave out orders and emanated cheer. Mary wanted the ceremony in the front room so that he could look on from his open door and be in a manner present; but Lemuel forbade it, and ordered that it should be out under the old elm. And he was to be left alone, to rest, he said speciously, though with the gleam in his eye that made Mary and Dan suspect he was laughing at them, and after it they were to sing, — 'Coronation,' for one, — and then they were to dance. Ezra Hines was to play his fiddle.

It all fell out exactly as Lemuel had planned. There was merry-making and much eating, and everybody forgot how strange it all was, with old 'Leven-Inch lying in the house there, perhaps getting well and perhaps near his end, and let themselves go in a gay abandon. And when the party was over, the little bride came shyly in to let Lemuel see her in her white dress, and he said to her, —

'You're as pretty as a picter in them frill-de-dills — though you ain't a mite handsomer — nor so handsome — as Mary was when she walked out a bride.'

Lydia was a little frightened, because this must, after all, be old 'Leven-Inch; but it looked like a man she had never seen, and she stepped up to him and laid her hand timidly on his and ran away.

The next morning Lemuel seemed quite strong and untired, but he said to Mary, when she came in at sunrise, —

'You tell Dan to kinder stay round this forenoon. He can be takin' down the tables an' rakin' up the clutter if there is any.'

'Don't you feel so well?' she asked. 'You think you better see doctor?'

'No,' said Lemuel, 'I don't want no

doctor. You have your breakfast an' then you se' down here side o' me an' stay a spell. 'T won't be long.'

Mary hurried through her breakfast and came back to him. She felt in haste, as if there was something to be asked him and she must ask it and make sure. Then she thought what it was.

'Lemuel,' said she, 'what was it you meant when you said, "Where do you s'pose I've been?"'

Lemuel turned his head on the pillow and smiled at her. He looked very secretive and knowing, but not at that moment, she thought with a kind of terror, old. The marks of his hard life and his penury had fallen away from him and he was young.

'You let me take hold o' your hand,' said he. 'So. There, that's right.'

He shut his eyes, and while she watched him his face seemed to her to grow more secretive and certainly more still. In an hour, perhaps, the doctor came in and she looked up at him.

'Why,' said he, without a pause to make sure of it, 'he's gone!'

'But, doctor,' said Mary, with a cry, 'you know before —'

'No,' said the doctor; 'this time he's gone for good.'

The week after his father was buried, Dan went into the front room by himself and opened the Bible where his father had put the mark. He thought he would do it every week while he lived, but he had not told anybody. His father was the only one he wished he could tell, and somehow he felt his father knew. And when he was about to close the book, it fell open at the Family Record, and under the deaths he saw a new entry, and stared at it until he could bear his own solitary discovery of it no longer and went to the door and called, —

'Mother! Lyddy! you come here.'

They came hurrying, and he showed them the record. It was in pencil in his father's crabbed hand.

'He put that down there himself, the day before the weddin',' said Dan. 'An' that was the day before his death.'

'Yes,' said his mother, 'he put it down, date an' all, day o' the month an' day o' the week.'

'Yes,' said Lyddy, in awe, peering at the record, her pretty head against Dan's arm to bring her nearer, but really because she liked it there.

'O Dan'el,' said his mother, in a great burst of yearning hope, 'where do you s'pose he'd been?'